FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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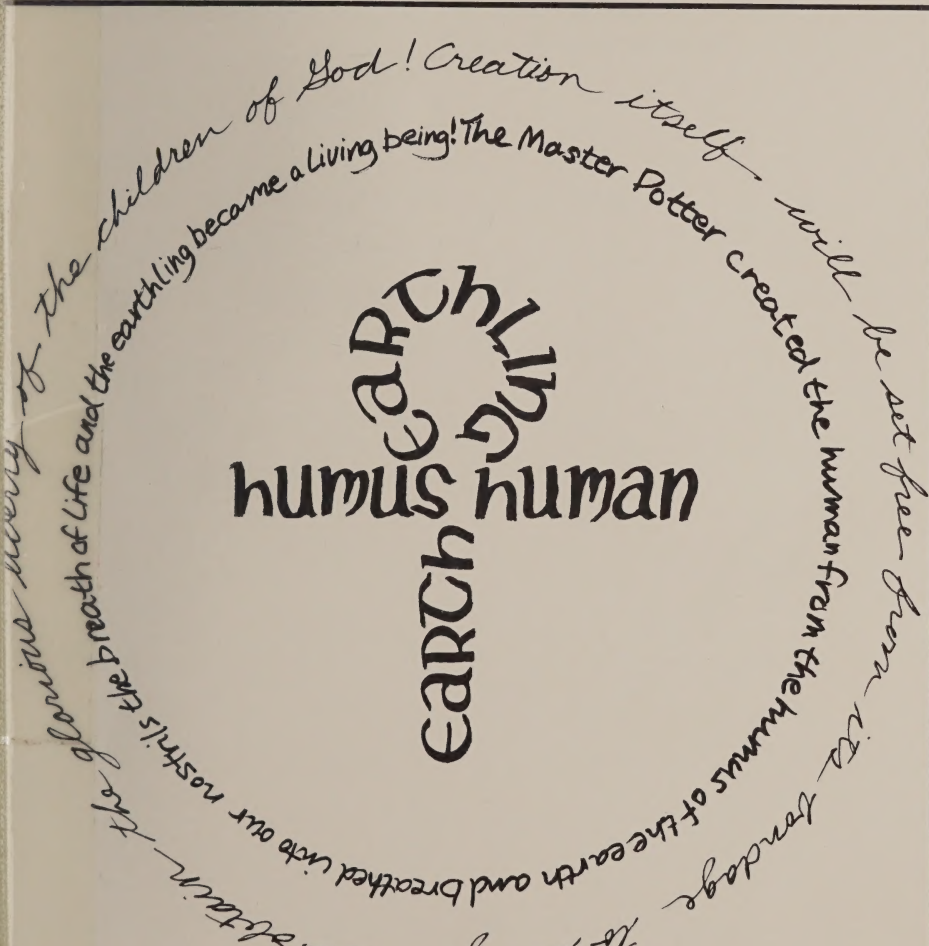

humus human
earth
earthling
It doesn't cost anything to be a friend.
Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God!
The Master Potter created the human from the humus of the earth and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and the earthling became a living being!

KENT I. GROFF 1990

Genesis 2:7 Romans 8:22

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

A Message From the President 2

Editor's Introduction 4

Insights 6

Reuben L. Musey: A Remembrance, by Samuel M. Silver 7

Praying While Folding, by Elise Harvey 9

Ch'an, by Sheng-yen Chang 14

New Poetry 23

Praying with Earth, Air, Fire and Water, by Carol Bialock 25

Ask Angela, by Barbara Ackerman 31

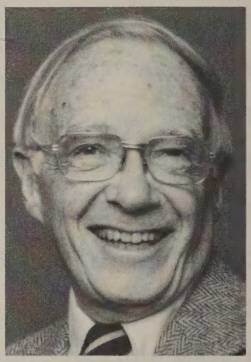
Praying to the *Shekhinah*, by Ketura Eshel 34

Spirituality and Everyday Life: Indomitable Milkweeds, by Mary Catherine Smith 41

Discovering the Unlimited Self, by Geery S. Howe 43

Letters to the Editor 47

Cover Art by Kent I. Groff



If the enthusiasm shown for Fellowship in Prayer's first "Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth" is any indication, there is a large, growing, and passionate number of people who are actively committed to the healing of our endangered planet.

Most of the women and men I have talked to about "Help Heal Mother Earth Day" have envisioned it as the celebratory beginning of an ongoing commitment—a covenant with God, if you will—to do all in their power to help restore God's creation to its optimum condition. And virtually all believe that personal prayer is a vital part of our potential power to heal ourselves, each other and the earth.

Scientific support for that belief is reported in the May/June issue of *New Realities* magazine in a fascinating article by Larry Dossey, M.D., on the relationship between prayer and healing. He describes a rigorous scientific study of patients in the coronary care unit at San Francisco General Hospital, where experiments using the most scientific criteria available in clinical studies in medicine, showed conclusively that patients who were prayed for did far better than a control group of patients who were not prayed for.

Even more remarkable results have been recorded by Spindrift, a unique, non-profit, scientific research organization whose primary interest is studying the healing effects of spirituality and prayer.

> "The first questions asked by the Spindrift researchers are fundamental. Is spiritual healing real, does prayer work, is there an effect that can be measured, and is the effect reproducible? One of the simplest ways of answering these questions is to test the interaction of a healer or prayer-practitioner with a simple biological system such as sprouting seeds. If the healer prays for one batch of germinating seeds and not another, is there a difference in the rate of germination?"

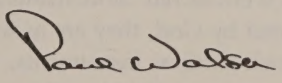
The scientific details of the Spindrift experiments and testing procedures make "dry, difficult reading" and are too lengthy to be described here. (If you're interested, write *Spindrift*, at 2407 La Jolla Drive, N.W., Salem, Oregon 97304.) Some of the results, however can be stated sim-

ply and briefly: 1. Prayer works best when physical conditions are at their worst. 2. The more you pray, the greater the effect. 3. The more "practiced" the pray-er, the better the result. 4. Non-directed prayer ("Thy will be done.") is far more effective than asking for a specific outcome. Results were frequently twice as great, or more, when compared to the directed approach of asking for a specific result.

These findings about the effectiveness of prayer were very much on my mind as the congregation in the Princeton University Chapel joined in the following prayer on "Help Heal Mother Earth Day."

A Prayer of Gratitude

LEADER: We live in all things.
All things live in us.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: We live by the sun.
We move with the stars.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: We eat from the earth.
We drink from the rain.
We breathe from the air.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: We share with the creatures.
We have strength through their gifts.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: We depend on the forests.
We have knowledge through their secrets.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: We have the privilege of seeing and understanding.
We have the responsibility of caring.
We have the joy of celebrating.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: To recreate the human community.
To promote justice and peace.
To remember our children.
RESPONSE: *We rejoice in all life.*
LEADER: We join together as many and diverse expressions of one loving mystery: for the healing of the earth and the renewal of all life.



Paul Walsh
President

This summer I attended a conference at Fordham University on new directions in world spiritualities. About three hundred people gathered for a weekend of talks by experts in American Indian spirituality, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and several other religious traditions. Speakers from as far away as Paris and Jerusalem affirmed strong hope in the infinite transformative potential of the individual and the world in response to God's love.

Robert Thurman, a Professor in the Religion Department at Columbia University and a friend of the Dalai Lama, said that the Dalai Lama is extremely hopeful about the next century. The Dalai Lama contrasts the beginning of the 20th century with the beginning of the 21st century and mentions four trends that have made him feel optimistic. (1) A hundred years ago people glorified war, but today—under the threat of "weapons that destroy the user,"—we value peace. (2) A century ago people believed in systems and feared the individual, but we now believe in the liberation of the individual. (3) At the dawn of the 20th century, people thought science was going to solve all the world's problems, but we now have given up our unrealistic expectations of science and have turned toward spirituality. (Physical science can't transform the human soul, but "spiritual science" can, Thurman said.) And (4) when the 20th century began, we were killing the earth, but today we are making serious efforts to reverse the destruction.

Wei-Ming Tu, a Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy at Harvard University, speaking of the Confucian revival in South East Asia, saw hope in the "feministic" (not feminist) vision that has spread across the globe. He emphasized "feministic" values like inclusivity, interconnectedness, and communal participation in the realization of individual abilities. Similarly, Raimundo Panikkar, Professor of Religious Studies, Emeritus, at the University of California, Santa Barbara, said that exclusivism is an insult to the human spirit and no longer viable.

A very important idea from Jill Raitt, a Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri, Columbia, brought further hope. Raitt spoke of "the goodness of the manufactured," meaning there is nothing that is not sacred. Since manufactured products are made from molecules created by God, they are as worthy of reverence as nature is. We must cherish medical instruments, machines, and even petrochemicals, she

said, simply because they exist. Here is hope for turning one more conflict—that between the natural and the human-made—into a harmonious relationship. The same elements exist in both systems, and there is no reason to revere them in one and not the other.

It was good to hear people place so much hope in world events. But there was a deeper vision behind their words than anticipation of a better century. It was a profoundly spiritual vision of God's love and will for the world, a sense that God's purposes are being served in contemporary history, and that the cosmos is evolving, as religious people have always believed, toward its ultimate destination in God.

Someone has written that hope is "a seed of what can be," that it blossoms and stretches toward the future through the presence and activity of God, and comes to fulfillment in eternity. Perhaps because we learn over and over again that when we wait, we receive, we tend to believe in a final fulfillment that will make our lives meaningful in an absolute way. Or perhaps it is inherent in human beings to hope beyond death, as though something ancient in our minds were whispering: there is more to come.

The Fordham Conference reminded me that we have no assurance of anything, no certainty, but we have every reason to hope.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky
Editor

O, God, you are the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, and the strength of the wills that serve you; help us so to know you that we may truly love you, so to love you that we may fully serve you.

St. Augustine

Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.

Teilhard de Chardin

What is humanity without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men and women would die from great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beast also happens to humanity. All things are connected.

Chief Seattle of the Duwamish Tribe

Won't you come into my garden?
I would like my roses to see you.

Richard B. Sheridan

Open wide the window of our spirits, O Lord, and fill us full of light; open wide the door of our hearts, that we may receive and entertain you with all our powers of adoration and love.

Christina Rossetti

We first knew you a feeble plant which wanted a little earth whereon to grow. We gave it to you; and afterward, when we could have trod you under our feet, we watered and protected you. And now you have grown to be a mighty tree, whose top reaches the clouds, and whose branches overspread the whole land, whilst we, who were the tall pine of the forest, have become a feeble plant and need your protection.

Red Jacket (Sagoyewatha)

If I go everywhere with you, my God, everywhere things will happen as I desire for your sake.

St. John of the Cross

For Thou art my lamp, oh Lord, and my God lightens my darkness.

2 Sa. 22.29

Reuben L. Musey: A Remembrance

SAMUEL M. SILVER

It is with great sorrow that we announce the death of Reuben L. Musey, a beloved Trustee and past President of Fellowship in Prayer. After twenty years of generous service to our organization, Reuben passed away in Hagerstown, Maryland, on July 13, 1990. We all join Rabbi Silver in his warm expression of gratitude for the life of this modest, faithful and loving man.

Reuben Musey, very fittingly, had a Biblical name. His life was also Biblical. Reuben, we read in Genesis, means "behold, a son!" When his parents were blessed with his arrival they no doubt echoed the cry, "Behold, A Son!" And what a son he became!

As we mourn his premature departure from this world, we marvel at how much he was able to accomplish before the good Lord took him from us, leaving us smitten and stunned.

Measure a life not by the number of years, but by the number of good deeds an individual has performed during his stay on this planet. By that count Reuben Musey lived a full and abundant life.

Occupationally, as a valuable staff member of Hagerstown Junior College from which he had retired just before his sudden death, he was almost the "indispensable man." Officials of the college testify to his total devotion to his duties, his extraordinary efficiency, and the almost religious zeal that prompted him to the discharge of his important tasks.

Domestically, Reuben Musey exemplified ideal wholesomeness of family life. He and his beloved Rosie, who was his partner for 26 years, never fell "out of love." They were a team, consecrating their hearts to one another. Reuben also tenderly looked after Rosie's mother in sickness and in health as though he were eager to show his gratitude to his mother-in-law for fashioning so wonderful a life-mate for him.

In the realm of gratitude for one's native land, Reuben Musey was a role model for all of us. Some Americans are appreciative of their good fortune in living in this blessed land of ours. Other Americans take for granted the freedom of the USA. Reuben Musey savored the benefits of our country with all his heart and soul and might.

A member of the Fellowship in Prayer Board of Trustees, Rabbi Samuel Silver serves the congregation of Temple Sinai in Delray Beach, FLA.

Another facet of his life concerned his ability to record, with his facile pen and his amazing knowledgeability, some of the highlights of American history, especially in the region where he resided.

He wrote for many publications fascinating accounts of the background of the sites in his area and vividly retold the events which took place in yesteryear. A natural teacher, he edified his readers as he chronicled meaningful historical episodes.

All of these characteristics in the life of Reuben Musey are eclipsed by his unassuming piety. What pastors preached he practiced. He enjoyed being a devout Christian. Church attendance came naturally to him and his beloved Rosie. He loved the Lord and was sure that he was in turn beloved by the Almighty. Often Reuben was a lay preacher, a religious school teacher, a lecturer in his church dispensing enthusiastically his vast knowledge and kindling the interest of his enraptured auditors.

It was his devoutness that made Fellowship in Prayer a magnetic force for Reuben Musey. The basic dictum that communion with God is good for you, that it is helpful for you, that indeed it is therapeutic for you, drew Mr. Musey towards Fellowship in Prayer.

And Fellowship in Prayer gained much from Mr. Musey's devotion, dedication and ingenuity. He had a natural affinity with the views of the founder of FiP and his legatee, Kathryn Brown. He served as president of FiP and never ceased to regard the Fellowship (and all its fellows) as important objectives of his life.

Rarely did Reuben miss a meeting either of the executives of FiP or of one of the many committees where he served and often led. His contacts with Miss Brown and her successor as president, Paul Walsh, were continuous—by phone, by mail, by encounters.

FiP feels orphaned by his sudden demise. FiP feels enriched by his contribution to its activities. He will live on in many hearts. His buoyant spirit and his spirituality will continue to energize us all.

We extend heartfelt sympathy to his wife and family. May we honor his memory by rededicating ourselves to his aims—the creation of a world worthy of the approval of Almighty God.

Praying While Folding

ELISE HARVEY

A Japanese child, Sadako Sasaki, who was two when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, was struck down with leukemia eight years later. A friend then told her the "legend of the cranes": if you fold 1000 paper cranes, you will get your wish.

Sadako folded 644 cranes before she died. On her last crane, she wrote, "I will write peace on your wings, and you will fly all over the world." Friends folded the remainder of Sadako's thousand and buried them with her. They then asked the children of Japan to contribute to a monument for Sadako which now stands in the Peace Park in Hiroshima. At the base of the monument are their words: "This is our cry, this is our prayer: peace in the world." Today people all over the world send and bring Peace Cranes to lay beneath Sadako's monument as colorful symbols of peace and hope.

Here is the story of one person who prays while folding.

Every day I fold Origami Peace Cranes. While folding, I repeat my favorite prayer/mantra:

Lord Jesus Christ,
You are the Light of the world,
Fill my mind with your Peace
Fill my heart with your Love.

This prayerful folding is my basic form of meditation.

I found myself repeating this prayer all the time, in all sorts of situations, from simple to complex, joyous to absurd, boring to thrilling, nourishing to potentially devastating. Caution was given to not say the prayer while driving, for we might lose awareness of our environment and the present moment (as we could with any good mantra). It was suggested that we repeat it not only during meditation time, but also whenever any Light comes into view. Dawn provides a good opportunity, also sunshine reflecting on water or bouncing off windows, icicles, sunsets, the moon, street lights illuminating our nights or simple reading lamps. Any suggestion of Light could inspire the prayer.

I find comfort in the repetition. Moments of stress are soothed by the

In addition to folding Peace Cranes, Elise Harvey writes, sings and plays autoharp.

Folding Peace Cranes in Kathmandu

prayer, diminishing *dis*tress. I add to my calm and comfort by breathing deeply during the prayer: one long in-breath with the first two lines; one extended exhalation with the last two.

During my first years of knowing this prayer, I began to discover its power. Not only was I becoming a calmer person, I was being asked about the Calm. I felt the prayer/mantra to be richly responsible for my new peacefulness, so I began to share it with some of the people who asked.

When I came back East to help Elisabeth Kubler-Ross with her new Center in Virginia, I met a mountain woman who was suffering from dreadful headaches. These happened every morning on her way to work. I believed that the Peace/Love prayer could help her, so I told her that if she said this prayer for 10 minutes every morning before leaving for work, her headaches would go away. And they did.

During the third year of my practice of this prayer, a dear friend in Delaware taught me how to fold Peace Cranes. I agreed to teach children

at the Peace Table at Community Days. I was enchanted by the legend of the cranes and the meditative quality of the folding process. As the habit of folding grew on me, I found the rhythm of the Peace/Love prayer blending appropriately into the rhythm of folding. The peaceful activity of folding with prayer became more and more important in my life.

During the fourth year of the Peace/Love prayer, I was given a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. This has become another great teacher, opening many doors for me.

During my fifth year with this prayer, I began folding Peace Cranes with young children in a library on the coast of Maine. I made one rule for the folding: do not say "can't" while folding, nor "I forget." Saying what you *want* to do helps you do it better.

The children's first 1000 were taken to Sadako's monument in the Hiroshima Peace Park. Their second 1000 were folded to honor Samantha Smith of Maine. Their third 1000 are in Senator George Mitchell's office in Washington. These children have folded over 10,000 Peace Cranes.

My sixth year of practicing this prayer found me approaching my 50th birthday. By then, I had folded and given away thousands of paper cranes, and I had kept none. I decided to fold myself 1000 as a birthday present small enough to wear. I chose rainbow colors, cutting tiny squares and folding for hours each day. I usually sat in bright sunlight, always repeating my favorite prayer into the heart of each Peace Crane.

The legend of the cranes proclaims that if you fold 1000, you will have your wish. I was not wishing for anything, but I certainly had been praying for my mind to be filled with Peace and my heart with Love. When I came to number 996 of my 1000 tiny rainbow birthday cranes, a message popped up from the depths of my memory: "go to Kathmandu to meet that doctor who cures M.S.!"

Long before I finished the birthday 1000, I was deeply habituated to my daily folding practice. I didn't want to stop folding after 1000, because I was gaining so much peace, so I simply cut more tiny squares and made more baby rainbow peace cranes, incorporating the meditative prayer into each fold.

My seventh year of living with my favorite prayer found me around the world in Kathmandu, still folding Peace Cranes. Almost everyone who saw my tiny 1000 wanted to learn how to fold, so I had the opportunity of teaching people from all corners of the world how to make

peace with paper. The Doctor I went to see in Nepal is a Buddhist monk whose family has practiced Ayurvedic medicine for 700 years. There is no charge for their services. My tiny 1000 Peace Cranes seemed to me the best gift to offer in appreciation for his care, but he would not accept them until I had finished my second 1000. I asked him why, and he responded with a broad smile: "because *you* need them."

During my eighth year with this prayer, I went from the Himalayas to the Green Mountains of Vermont with the idea of building a Peacemakers' Park where the children of the world could honor peacemakers. Folding Peace Cranes would be an integral part of the park activities, being one way that children can make peace, as well as one way to honor those who have made peace.

The tiny Peace Cranes, empowered by the Peace/Love prayers folded into them, are full of energy. I placed the cranes over the bandage of a dear Vermont friend who had accidentally cut herself deeply on a broken window. I told her that I believed this would help her healing process.

The pain went away very soon, and later she told me that it never came back. Her doctor was amazed at how fast her arm healed.

These tiny birds have grown bedraggled from all of their adventures. One friend calls them my "Velveteen Rabbit Peace Cranes," because their edges are worn and their color faded. I allowed them to "retire" because I kept on folding. My third tiny 1000 are now pinned over my heart each day with a Peace button that says "Make Peace."

My ninth year with this favorite prayer finds me in Michigan with my grandchild Molly, daughter of the son who calls me his Origami Mami. At 10 months, Molly is already folding, the way "Gami" always does.

I continue to teach everywhere I am invited: schools, churches, libraries, hospitals. Whoever sees the flock of colorful birds over my heart is attracted to them. I believe that the magnetism of their color has been increased immeasurably by the power of the prayers folded inside.

Ch'an

SHEN-YEN CHANG

"In whatever situation you find yourself, strive to be your best in that situation, not in some illusion you fear or crave." Such ancient counsel of the Buddha punctuates every page of this article on "Ch'an" (the Chinese word for Zen).

I slept at a friend's house last night. In the morning when we gathered for breakfast, his wife asked me, "Did you sleep well? Did anything bother you?" I said, "I slept quite well." I told them that there is nowhere in the world that is free from noise and disturbance. My friend added that no matter where we are or what we do, our minds are always buzzing with self-created problems. It is true we are most disturbed not by what goes on around us, but what goes on in our heads.

What is going on in our heads? It's our thoughts entangled with the past, present, future. And it's not being able to get what we want when we want it, and not being able to get rid of what displeases us when we are displeased.

It might seem that some people can always get what they want. Imagine a campus heartthrob. Perhaps he's got three girlfriends he can call on any given night. It looks like he can have whoever he wants, but he still has to choose one of the three. Can he have all three at the same time? Eventually you reach a limit.

You might think that it's very easy to get rid of what you don't want, but this is not necessarily so. Many people get married only to find later that they want to be single again, but it is not easy to dissolve a marriage.

In making decisions we usually connect the past, present, and future, and the process is fraught with contradictions. I don't bother to go through all of this. I'm involved in a long list of activities and I have many disciples in Taiwan and here in the United States. I am always busy. Nevertheless, I am not disturbed by the number of obligations I have and the amount of work I must do. People ask me how I manage to deal with all of this. It is simply that I don't put myself in the way of what I do. There is nothing that I wish to do or not do for personal gain

A noted scholar and lecturer, Shih-fu (Master) Venerable Dr. Sheng-yen is President of the Ch'an Meditation Center in Elmhurst, NY. His article is based on a talk given at Washington University, St. Louis, MO, and reprinted in Ch'an *magazine*

or preservation. I do what I have to do with all my heart. I do not do what is not permitted me, what is unnecessary, and what I am unable to do.

Does this mean that I constantly change direction, try one thing, abandon it, and then try something else? No, because there is a central purpose that underlies everything that I do. I try to maintain the attitude of a Bodhisattva, and accordingly I try to benefit others as much as possible. It's fine if what I do for others is also of benefit or at least of no harm to me. Even sacrifice of oneself is sometimes necessary. Viewing the world this way and maintaining this attitude, I have no vexation.

Be sure to understand that the willingness to sacrifice oneself is really the mark of a saint. It is not something that most of us can do. Do not be overwhelmed by unrealistic demands on yourself. Do what you can with the abilities you have now. Don't think you have to be a saint and perform miraculous deeds. It is Confucianism that advocates striving after sagehood or sainthood. It is true that Buddhism advocates the Bodhisattva ideal. But this is for those who are ready, otherwise everything in its time. To be taken for a Bodhisattva when you have not truly attained this state is to have problems indeed.

"A Ch'an practitioner should maintain an attitude of equanimity. If the money comes, it comes. If the money goes, it goes. Neither circumstance should create wild fluctuations in the mind."

I sometimes come across people who treat me as if I were a great master. To such people, I say, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but please don't take me for a saint. Otherwise you will end up by causing me harm." Why would anyone want to add to his or her suffering by posing as someone else's ideal, as someone else's illusion? Most often our suffering derives from unrealistic demands that we make or others make upon us.

A Ch'an story goes as follows: There was a monk who asked his master, "What did Bodhidharma bring when he came to the East?" The master replied, "He didn't bring anything." The monk insisted, "Didn't Bodhidharma bring *Buddhadharma*, the teaching of Buddha, from the West?" The master replied, "No, not really. *Buddhadharma* has always been in China." The monk was puzzled, "Well, that's strange then. If *Buddhadharma* was already here, why did Bodhidharma bother coming

to China?" The master's reply is interesting: "Because *Buddhadharma* was already here, it is for that reason that Bodhidharma had to leave India and come here."

Do you get that?

What did Bodhidharma tell us? He said that everyone can become a Buddha. Everyone has Buddha Nature, but no one realizes it. How can we attain this realization? He gave us two methods. The first is the method of principle. The second is the method of practice.

In the first method there is nothing to talk about and nothing to do. You use no logic and there is no need to practice; you simply make your mind the same as a wall. You can see through this wall; it is transparent. It does not move. Nonetheless, you can hang things on it and you can write on it. But the wall itself does not change. Just so, your mind may contain knowledge and experience, but it is unaffected by them. In reality, it is empty of everything just as the substance of the wall is neither increased nor reduced by what is hung upon it.

When the mind is confused, you believe that what is stored in it is you. Then you continually try to take some things out and put other things in. The motion and confusion in the mind increase. The mind is strange. When you have no use for something stored in your mind, it comes out and gets in your way. When you need something from your mind, it often happens that you can't find it anywhere.

This afternoon someone came up to me but forgot what it was he wanted to say. It hid from him. Why was that?

If your mind is calm and cool, there's no need to anxiously search it for information. With a calm mind, what you need is available. When you are at a loss, it is because your mind is spinning with craving, misgiving, and distress. When your mind is like a wall, then it is like the mind of the Buddha.

Can you make your mind like a wall? Can you take all your past knowledge and experience and lock them in a storehouse. Can you prevent their escape? Who among you thinks that they can do that?

We often meet people who talk constantly. Sometimes there is nothing left for us to do but to tell them to shut up. That may be easy. But what happens when it is your mind that you are trying to quiet? Are you able to tell your mind to silence your wandering thoughts? Probably not.

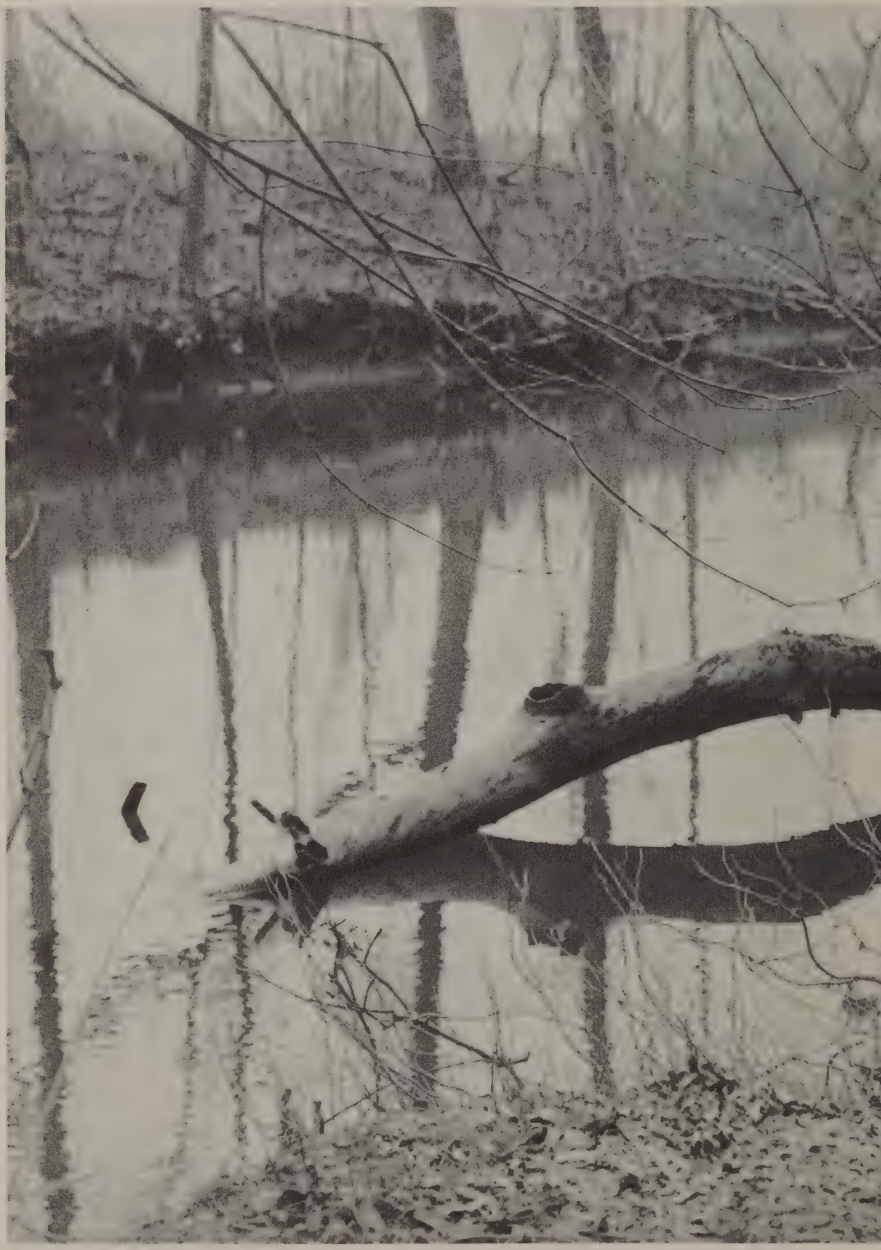
It is for this reason that Bodhidharma also gave us the second method, that of practice. He divided the method of practice into four stages.

David Martosko

The first stage has to do with suffering. You recognize that your problems and the difficulties that befall you stem from your previous karma. Everything that now exists has its origin in some other place and some other time. We may not be able to know this origin. What has brought us and all around us to this present moment has its roots in innumerable past lives. But most of us cannot look deep into the past, and there is no way for us to prove the existence of past lives. Even in this life there are many things we are unable to remember. When we are confronted by unpleasantness and unhappiness in the present, we should know that they are rooted in what we have done in the past. We may be unable to perceive exactly what that cause was, nevertheless we should understand that the origin is in ourselves and accept the consequences that we now confront.

Is this unconditional acceptance a sign that the Ch'an approach is passive or negative? Not at all. By understanding that we have laid the ground work for our suffering in the past, we can see that the here and now is the groundwork for the future. We can lay down a new cause right now to counteract our present suffering and immediately put ourselves on a course that will be more positive. By doing this we pay back debts that we have accrued in previous incarnations.

It is important to understand that this paying back consists of acting properly in the moment with what we have at hand. It does not mean surrendering. If this building burst into flames, there would be a cause for it. What would we do? Would we attempt to douse the flame? Or



Brooks Walsh

would we sit down and try to figure out how the fire started? There's no need to concern ourselves with the reason. What we must do is to put out the fire now. When we have done everything that is humanly possible, only then do we unequivocally accept the consequences without complaint.

In the second stage, we develop the awareness that what we find good or pleasant is also the result of causes in the past, and we don't get caught up in the feelings of gladness. We don't take good fortune as a sign of our own specialness or greatness. We don't let such things add to a sense of self. After all, when something good happens to us, we are simply experiencing the consequences of the hard work we have done in the past. It is as if we are withdrawing money from the bank. And what is so wonderful about withdrawing money from our account? We must realize that happy events are not all that they seem. Some people still find ways to be unhappy in pleasant circumstances. Many of those with wealth, power, and position are not necessarily happy. Even a simple, common event such as boy meeting girl may not create happiness for all of the parties involved. This is not to say that they will necessarily be unhappy. But good fortune and happy occurrences should not lead us to pride or self-satisfaction. A lot of people forget themselves when they meet with success.

There is a story in China about a beggar who won a lottery. He had the winning ticket secreted in a bamboo walking stick. When he found out that he had won the prize, he was so overjoyed that he resolved then and there to never again have anything to do with begging. In a burst of exultation he threw his old clothes and all of his meagre possessions into a nearby river. Unfortunately, the walking stick was one of the discarded items. Too late, he watched it and his new life float downstream.

A Ch'an practitioner should maintain an attitude of equanimity. If the money comes, it comes. If it goes, it goes. Neither circumstance should create wild fluctuations in the mind.

By the third stage, the practitioner has come to maintain an attitude of not seeking. Of course, whether you are in the East or in the West, it would seem that nothing could be accomplished if you didn't set out to accomplish it. Normally, we have desires and goals which we are striving towards. This is what motivates us, and this is very natural. But it often happens that we are unable to attain what we seek.

There is a Chinese saying: If you have the intention of planting a

Gisela Lichtgarn

flower, the flower will not blossom. But a willow will flourish even if no one plants it.

Not seeking anything, there is no single goal to attain. Nonetheless, we must work hard. Without hard work, life is meaningless. We need to work. We need motivation to accomplish everyday tasks. But in terms of spiritual cultivation, keeping a specific goal in mind is itself an obstacle to the accomplishment of the goal. Ordinary aims can be achieved by desire and direct effort, but the highest goal cannot be approached in this way.

If, for example, you practice to achieve enlightenment, you will find your goal moving farther and farther away from you. What does enlightenment mean? It means liberation, both from constraints imposed by the self and those imposed by the external world. Seeking, even if it is for enlightenment, is just another constraint.

Now we arrive at the fourth and last stage of practice. Each method reaches a progressively higher level. The first one is fairly easy to carry out. So, too, is the second one, but the third poses more of a problem. Few can put it into practice.

At the fourth level of practice one simply does whatever should be done. Whatever you need of me, I do. One who has only reached the third level may do a task well, but there may be some negativity in his attitude. But by the fourth level of practice, the practitioner manifests positive, forthright action.

I once met a young man who had wanted to become a lawyer from the time he graduated high school. As it turned out, he was unable to pass the entrance exam, so he eventually studied library science instead. At first he was quite disappointed. After he graduated, he went to France to do research on the French library system. Eventually, he received his Ph.D. in library science. Then he was invited back to Taiwan because there are very few Ph.D.'s in library science there, and they needed somebody for the central library. He came to me for advice and I quoted a Chinese saying to him: "Once you board the pirates' boat, be a pirate." I told him to go all the way with library science. He came back from France and thanked me. Things turned out quite well for him, and he was probably better off than if he had become a lawyer. In whatever situation you find yourself, strive to be your best in that situation, not in some illusion you fear or crave. When things change, change with them. With this attitude, your life should run more smoothly, and your vexations and troubles will be few.

Light

The light of lights
lives deep in the earth
of our beings . . .

The marrow of stars.

June Moreau

The sound of a bell

I chased the sound
of a bell at noon
to the edge of the horizon
and held it
throbbing in my hands
until it took wings and flew
a white bird
against a cloud of blue.

June Moreau

Baskets of poems

My thoughts are ripe today
I'll gather them
from their tender stems
They are so mellow
and so many
It must be harvest time.

June Moreau

Translators

From my kitchen window
I love to watch
squirrels skittering
and leaping
translating the branches
of oak
into the poetry
of the skies.

June Moreau

Chicory flowers

I searched the sky for a word
to describe the blue of chicory
a blue burnt by the sun,
cooled by a wave.
A blue so slender
and yet so wide
that in it
some red must hide!

June Moreau

Finding my way

Do I need the clear,
cool swath of a scythe
to find my way . . .
or shall I give myself up
to the hayfield
and clover my spitit.

June Moreau

Unless I Can

I cannot feed all starving world-children,
shelter all homeless, heal all broken bodies,
cannot stop the scarring, the killing of every

soul caught between "enemies" and "friends"
alike, nor encircle, with my arms, this turning
earth-globe with its millions who suffer, starkly

mute or screaming in agony. . . . And I cannot
bear the pain of my helplessness before such
hopeless odds, unless . . . unless I can own, as well,

my arrogance. I am only one, I know, but not *the*
only one. If, in caring love, as part of the whole
creation, I can *become* the you . . . and you—the you

who survives or dies within my orbit-hearing;
and if I respond to you, *as you*, each moment
then can hold, for me, accepted pain to compassion,

and in some reached-for way (and never grasped),
I can be one with all earth's wounded and one with
all God's healing, in our lighted passage home.

Emily Sargent Councilman

Whole

I am river
giving flow
of myself
to the sea
and

I am ocean
giving consent—
whole and holy
this ebb and flow
of me

Emily Sargent Councilman

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If you, too, find *Fellowship in Prayer* "a joy and inspiration" to read, won't you take a moment to read and fill in the other side of this page?

Paul Walsh
President
Fellowship in Prayer

Praying with Earth, Air, Fire and Water

CAROL BIALOCK

This important new method of prayer was literally "dreamed" into existence. Combining Native American, Judeo-Christian, Sufi and Hindu religious traditions, "prayer with the four elements" promises deeper awareness of God's presence and personal transformation.

Ten months ago I had a dream that went something like this: "We are celebrating the mystery of death and resurrection. I suggest the theme of earth, air, fire and water. I remember we took that same theme last year and I explain this fact to the leader, who says it's all right." Since then, I have been praying every day for prolonged periods with earth, air, fire and water, and it has been a healing and transforming experience.

The "theme" of air, earth, fire and water is a union of the most spiritual (air and fire) with the most material (water and earth). There is an "incarnation," a taking flesh, a joining of heaven and earth. And in a sense that is exactly what my prayer of the last ten months has been.

After that dream I began praying outside, walking slowly in the early morning before sunrise. I usually begin by breathing deeply, inhaling the relatively clear early morning air, relaxing, giving myself over to the Spirit.

As I walk along, I feel the solidity of the earth. I pause, and let my feet grow deep roots into the ground, into Mother Earth, into my Father/Mother God, ground of my being. Earth is rootedness, sureness, a standing under, security, steadiness when I abandon myself, surrender myself to this Father/Mother. Saying a prayer while being conscious of one's two feet on the earth, grounded, surrendered, is different from saying that prayer in other circumstances.

Then fire. It is often still dark, but the light is coming. "Come, enkindle my heart with your fire. Set me alight. Make me a living flame of love today. Come, fire of God." There is fire and light without, but there is also fire within, a flame of love that only God can kindle. Indeed, our God is a consuming Fire.

And as I walk the waters surge within me. We carry water within us. I do not need to be looking at the ocean, at a river or fountain to be in the presence of water. I am water. The water flows out of the earth below

my feet, out of the air around me, within me. I am washed by all the waters of the world, cleansed, renewed, purified. Lord, let me flow with your life, so I will be refreshing water for all. Let me see beyond appearances, so that I know that everything and every one today is also refreshing water for me.

Finally, the air that surrounds me is life-giving, powerful, peaceful. I depend on it from moment to moment. Come, Air; come deeper. Fill my lungs. Guide me. Air is also the bond among all living beings. I breathe in all the wonderful people I have ever known. I breathe in each one. We share, as we shared in the past and will share in the future, the same air. The communion of saints past, present and future becomes real through the air we share. I am one with Jesus, Mary, St. Francis, Buddha, Mohammed, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Jean Vanier, Mother Theresa, and all the little and great ones yet unborn.

All day long we are in the presence of earth, air, fire and water and therefore it is easy to remember that we are in the presence of God. We breathe God, walk upon God, flow with God, are surrounded by God's light. Native American spirituality is alive with this awareness. As one of its songs has it:

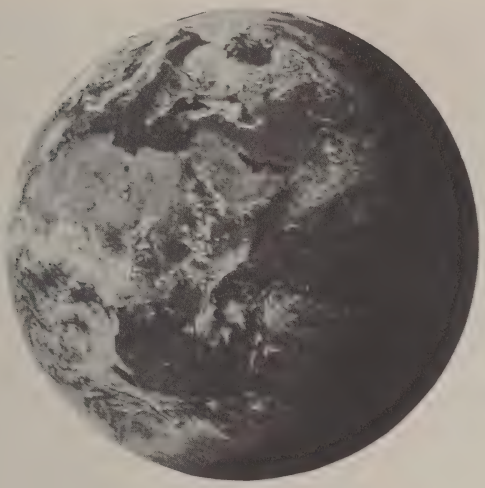
Oh, great spirit,
Earth, sun, sky and sea!
You are within
And all around me.

Sometimes it is good to return to just one of the elements towards midday or towards nightfall and renew the sense of God's presence and action and power and love. Or return to all four of them. They are always there, just as God is always there.

Another way to pray with the four elements entails using a purification prayer well-known among the Sufis. It is done by breathing, so it can be done anywhere, at any time.

First, a purification with earth. Breathe in through the nose and out through the nose. Exhale all impurities. Draw in the magnetic field of the earth, and feel how earth energy renews your whole being.

Then, slowly purify yourself with water. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Repeat. Feel the water from the atmosphere washing you clean within. Feel how the water drips from your whole body as you exhale.



Then, purify your whole being with fire. Slowly breathe in through the mouth and out through the nose. Repeat. Take in fire and light, down to your solar plexus. Then, as you breathe out, feel how light streams forth from the heart, the head, the whole body. Inhale fire. Exhale light.

Finally, purify yourself with air. Breathe in through the mouth and out through the mouth. Repeat. Let the wind blow through you, reaching to every part of you, carrying you where it will, blowing through every cell of your body.

Yet another form of prayer with the elements is possible through hatha yoga. The breathing, obviously, is a prayer with the most spiritual of the elements, air. But several of the postures lend themselves to a reflective, prayerful contact with all four of the elements. The mountain posture, where one is standing feet together, hands at sides, spine and head erect, the entire weight of the body resting evenly on the heels and toes, is conducive to this kind of prayer awareness. One becomes the mountain, rooted in earth, bathed in air, flowing with water and fire.

The corpse or relaxation posture, in which one is lying on the back, hands at sides with palms up, legs a bit apart, is another posture conducive to this kind of prayer. There is total contact and rootedness in the

earth. The breath is the one sign of life, and a link with God. Fire and water flow in a free, balanced and harmonious way within the body.

I have found that practically all the well-known yoga postures or *asanas* can be conducive to this kind of prayer, but I would especially single out, besides the ones already named, the salute to the sun, the folded leaf, the fish, the plough, the candle and the headstand.

Some have experienced the spiritual benefits to be derived from awareness of the *chakras* (seven energy centers in the body, starting at the base of the spine and reaching to the crown of the head). It is interesting and helpful to know that the first four *chakras* are associated with the four elements. The base *chakra* is related to earth, the sex *chakra* to water, the solar plexus *chakra* to fire and the heart *chakra* to air. This rather esoteric bit of knowledge can become quite practical when the spiritual value of working with the *chakras* is understood.

First, a brief explanation. These seven centers are related to and affect the endocrine glands, which with the nervous system control, balance and regulate our embodied selves. And since we pray with our whole being, a theoretical and experiential knowledge of the *chakras* can greatly help prayer.

Our body itself is a kind of inner teaching, if we know how to listen to it. In itself it is a prayer to be aware of these centers of energy in the body, and to let energy flow up from the base *chakra* or flow down from the seventh *chakra*, which is found on the crown of the head. One can imagine a white light above the head whose radiance flows down through the crown *chakra*, to the forehead and throat *chakra*, and on down to the base *chakra*. This flow of energy back and forth is God's own life coursing through us, cleansing us, vivifying us.

I will give just one example of how the elements associated with the first four *chakras* have profound significance. The first *chakra* roots us in the world, in the earth. It is the grounding, pragmatic, realistic *chakra*, the lowest one. The seventh, located in the crown of the head, is the highest and most spiritual, opening us out to God, to the influx of the Divine. Its symbol is the lotus flower. But the lotus cannot blossom if it is not rooted in the rich, dark mud of the base *chakra*. They are inextricably linked. And in prayer it is good to go back to this fact, feeling in our embodied self that we are earth, air, fire and water, and that these elements link us to the Divine.

God communicates through created things. So it seems normal that

Cliff Moore

we also communicate with God through created things. And the basic elements of creation and therefore of this communication are the four that surround us always.

Few knew more about communion with God through earth, air, fire, and water than St. Francis of Assisi. In his "Canticle of the Creature" he praises the elements as symbols of our union with God. In God, as in us, cosmic things represent inner things. Who contemplates fire has fire within. Earth, air, fire and water open the hidden avenues of the soul. They are both a symbol of our union with God and a means to that union if we know how to use them as a spring-board to prayer.

It seems appropriate to close with a quotation from St. Francis' great Canticle:

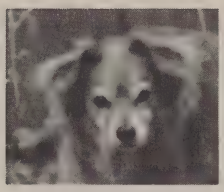
Praise be to Thee my Lord for Brother Wind,
For air and clouds, clear sky and all the weathers
Through which Thou sustainest all Thy creatures.

Praise be to Thee my Lord for Sister Water,
She is useful and humble, precious and pure.
Praise be to Thee my Lord for Brother Fire,
Through him our night Thou dost enlighten,
And he is fair and merry, boisterous and strong.

Praise be to Thee my Lord for our sister Mother Earth,
Who nourishes and sustains us all,
Bringing forth divers fruits and many-colored flowers and herbs.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN



Here is more wisdom from Angela, a "ten-year-old with a red collie coat, fox-like snout, and deep brown soulful eyes." Angie wants to thank you for all your kind and generous responses to her advice. "It pleases me," she writes, "to think of FiP *readers all over the world buying dog biscuits." She invites you to send her any questions "of the heart or spirit" with which you need help. Please send them in care of Barbara Ackerman, 24 Bank Street, Princeton, NJ 08540, and Angie will answer them in future issues of* FiP.

In the meantime we are including here one of the questions you have already sent in and Angie's answer.

Dear Angela,

Do you ever feel mean and ugly? Could you share your thoughts about this? Many thanks.

Sincerely,
Feeling Mean and Ugly Right Now

Dear Mean and Ugly,

You too? I'm so relieved. There are many times when I feel like the only meany on the whole planet. Don't knock your mean and ugly feelings 'til you've tried them. Remember: It takes a really big heart to love the good, the bad, *and* the ugly. When we grow to accept and cherish the darker parts of ourselves, life just rolls along more smoothly.

Whether you have a good reason or no good reason at all, feeling mean and ugly can be healthy, refreshing, and, at times, even necessary. It may become important to bark, nudge, snarl, and growl.

There are, of course, two types of mean and uglies. One gives you energy while the other leaves you feeling droopy. Telling the difference between the two will be very important. One kind you can use, the other you need to lose. It will be helpful to know when to share your mean and uglies with others, and when to be mean and ugly off by yourself.

There are times when it is just good clean fun to be a little mean and ugly, like barking at the mailman from behind a closed door. Here, no one gets hurt, yet you get to feel feisty and energized. There are many good things to be said for having a good bark. Having safe circumstances and a safe place and a safe person to bark at in our lives is very important for everyone to have. Barking tells others you are to be taken seriously, you are a force to be reckoned with. Barking tells others you mean what you say.

There are times when life may require that we stand up and take care of ourselves. We may have to be mean and ugly to get what we need in order to live. For example: I adore macaroni and cheese sauce. I have to have it. For me, it is mean cuisine. When a dish of macaroni and cheese sauce is served to me and my housemate and comrade, I allow him two licks. Then I run with the dish and lick the sauce all by myself. In this instance, being mean and ugly to my comrade becomes an act of courage. I risk my loving and generous reputation for a higher, greater good: cheese sauce. By being mean and ugly, I am taking the best care of myself that I am able to. There are times when life may ask for this level of courage and commitment from us, and we may need to be mean and ugly to do it.

Life may require that we be mean and ugly to survive. If someone bigger is being mean and ugly to us, we may have to be mean and ugly back at them to protect ourselves from physical injury. There are times when neither getting mad nor getting even gets us anywhere. We need to get mean! We may need to bark, growl, yelp, snarl, or bite for our lives.

If you feel mean and ugly and bark at the mailman but find that you feel droopy afterwards, let this be a sign to you that your mean and ugly feelings need special attention; a healing needs to take place. When you feel mean, ugly, *and* droopy, you need extra special love, attention, and care. This is when you need a special friend or beloved family member to reassure you of your basic goodness. Hearing the word "good" linked to your name, coupled with frequent head pats and strokings, is the best medicine to cure the droopy kind of mean and uglies. You may need more assurance of your goodness like a hug, a kiss, some chicken, or special cookies. Just at the time when you need love and acceptance the most, you may be the least able to ask for it. This is because when you feel mean and ugly and droopy, you may not feel worthy of being held,

hugged, patted, kissed, or fed. Overwhelm yourself with kindness. Do not be shy, ask for the love you need. Remember: When you feel your meanest and ugliest is when you need love and acceptance the most.

During your droopy moments, I suggest prayer to help you feel better. Yes. Prayer still works wonders. This is because it is pretty hard to feel mean and ugly while you pray. The close-to-yourself, close-to-God feeling lingers long after the prayer itself, and even after the droopy, mean, and ugly feelings have eased.

I hope I have been of some help and hope to any of you who feel mean and ugly from time to time.

Faithfully,
Angela

CORRECTIONS

Apologies to Rev. John R. Welsh, S.J. for the error in his article, "Parable from the Sea," in our June, 1990 edition. "It's" should have been written as "its."

Also to June Moreau for the error in her haiku, "spring moon" (Vol. 41, No. 4, page 19). The second line should have said, "you are a tenant too."

Praying to *Shekhinah*

KETURA ESHEL

A rabbi uses the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to compose a remarkable prayer.

In the spring of 1989, a prayer came to me in the wee hours of the night. At that hour, tormented souls wait for dawn to release them from the ancient darkness. It was a long night and my favorite prayers were not being their usual effective selves. I needed an incantation to the Goddess, *Shekhinah*, but I could not find any. One part of me was begging for relief and the other was wondering why I did not have a *Shekinah* prayer.

Then and there, I decided to compose a prayer. I started with *Alef*, first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. I chose it because when all else fails, return to Go and start over. In the context of the Hebrew language, *Alef* equals Go.

I was glad to be doing something about my anguish. As I wanted for *Shekhinah* to approach my bed, I fell into an argument. What kind of prayer names words in alphabetical order? In half an hour I went from grief to prayer to *pilpul*; what a mess!

Hassidic stories about prayer danced round in my head. There is one about the shepherd who sits and whistles through an entire prayer service. He is an articulate whistler because that is how he communicates with his dogs. And another one about an elderly Jewish man who recites the Hebrew alphabet over and over, letter by letter. Finally he sighs, lifts his eyes, and says: "God, take these letters, please, and compose a prayer for me. You know my needs."

Later, as I worked to finish this *Shekhinah* prayer, logical mind continued to treat poetic mind as a lowly inferior. Sometimes daytime consciousness, discursive mind is at odds with nighttime consciousness, inspirational mind. Moon glow seems pale next to the bright shine of sun rays. I want to stand up for the rights of inspirational mind, nighttime consciousness.

This is a prayer for chanting and visualizing. The shapes and sounds of the letters, the meaning of the words, all are food for thought. Please, invite your poetic mind to find its own love words for *Shekhinah* and all Divine Beings.

Shekhinah

magnificent womb of the universe
we are your children.

Shekhinah

blessed queen of peace
we welcome you.

Alef is for *ADAMAH*. *Adamah* means *EARTH*. א

Like YHWH, *Shekhinah* has different names for different functions. As *Adamah*, Earth Mother, she nourishes, shelters and delights us with her trees, flowers, birds and animals.

Bet is for *BAT*. *Bat* means *DAUGHTER*. ב

All mothers and daughters are uniquely bonded through their connection with Shekhinah, the Universal Mother.

Gimel is for *GAN*. *Gan* means *GARDEN*. ג

We have parks and nature preserves to experience *Adamah* as woman and man experienced Her in the Garden of Eden. But as technology continues to encroach on nature, we will lose contact with *Adamah* in her pristine state.

Dalet is for *DIN*. *Din* means *JUDGMENT*. ד

Judgment builds on discernment and analysis. Depth psychologists say that women have a special talent for judging and valuing. Qabalists locate *Din* or Judgment on the feminine side of the Tree of Life.

A visual artist, poet and holistic healer, Rabbi Ketura Eshel resides in New Mexico where she appreciates the Native American heritage. Her spiritual work is featured in a recent edition of the Jewish Publication Society, The Invisible Web.

Heh is for *HAR*. *Har* means *MOUNTAIN*. ה

Adamah reaches for *Shamayim* (Heavens). When clouds lie low on the mountain, it is as if *Adamah* is touching *Shamayim*.

Vav is for *VERED*. *Vered* means *ROSE*. ו

The rose is a flower of love; its very fragrance hints of intimacy. Admire the rose in its bramble or risk your blood on its thorn when you pick it.

Zayin is for *ZIKARON*. *Zikaron* means *MEMORY*. ז

Because memory preserves and hides information, it is a feminine aspect of knowledge. The mystical masters say that memory is indispensable for evolving consciousness.

Rabbi Ketura Eshel

Hert is for *HAVAH*. *Havah* means *EVE*. ח

We do not have a complete biography of the first Biblical woman. We know that *Havah* means "mother of all life," a typical Goddess name.

Tet is for *TAHARAH*. *Taharah* means *PURIFICATION*. ט

Love purifies the heart as silence purifies the mind. Purification means removing obstacles to the shining presence of *Shekhinah* and her angels.

Yod is for *YAREAH*. *Yareah* means *MOON*. י

In matriarchal societies the calendar was lunar based and the months were known as moons. In Biblical days, *rosh hodesh* (the new moon) was a woman's holiday.

Kaf is for *KLEY*. *Kley* means *VESSEL*. כ

A container is receptive but not necessarily passive. Unfortunately some women do not understand the importance of being a vessel, as in pregnancy or listening carefully to another. Even as it holds, a vessel influences its contents.

Lamed is for *LILAH*. *Lilah* means *NIGHT*. ל

Queen of the night, *Shekhinah* speaks to us in our dreams. Once we learn the symbolic language of our dreams, we can see the past and future clearly.

Mem is for *MAYIM*. *Mayim* means *WATER*. מ

Adamah holds many bodies of water. They all spawn life as the amniotic sac spawns life in a woman's womb. Besides giving us life, water heals us of thirst, pain and heat.

Nun is for *NAYROT. Nayrot* means *CANDLES.* נ

To celebrate we light candles, to grieve we light candles. Every flame reminds us of the first light, Light of Creation, light of Infinity.

Samekh is for *SUKAH. Sukah* means *HUT.* ס

During the week-long harvest festival we eat and sleep in the *sukah*, a ritual hut. Scholars have varying and interesting theories about the origin of the *sukah*. We *Adamah* lovers say simply that we like camping out under the stars.

Ayin is for *ALMAH. Almah* means *MAIDEN.* ע

Maiden, matron, crone. Every phase in a woman's life has its own value. Let us not under or over-estimate any of these three phases.

Peh is for *PARAH. Parah* means *COW.* פ

In many mythologies, the cow is one of the Mother's animals. The cow symbolizes nourishment, contemplation and steadfastness.

Tsadi is for *TSEHOK. Tsehok* means *LAUGHTER.* צ

Shekhinah laughs at our foibles and we laugh in order to heal from them. *Tsehok* also means caress and play, both go well with laughter.

Qof is for *QETORET. Qetoret* means *INCENSE.* ק

Incense is made of any combination of herbs, flowers, sap, wine. The smoke purifies places, objects and people. The fragrance pleases the *Shekhinah* and uplifts our consciousness.

Resh is for *RIMON. Rimon* means *POMEGRANATE.* ר

In ancient times, the pomegranate was a favored fruit of the Goddess and one of the seven holy fruits of Israel. Then it symbolized fertility; today we know that it contains female hormones as well as alkaloids which are part of the brain system that controls the third eye.

Jane Moreau

Shin is for *SHIR*. *Shir* means *SONG*. שׁ

In love, in awe, in gratitude we hear a song in our heart, a melody which surpasses music.

Tav is for *TORAH*. *Torah* means *TEACHINGS*. ת

The Torah is more than a parchment scroll or a set of holy scriptures. "She is a Tree of Life for those who grasp her."

Indomitable Milkweeds

MARY CATHERINE SMITH

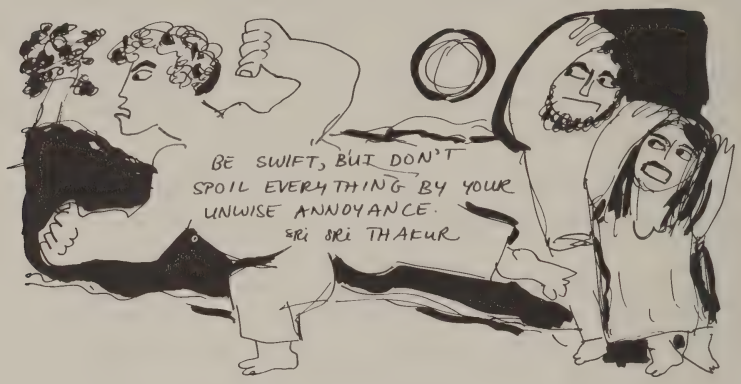
This author learned the hard way that human weaknesses are just like weeds: they keep coming back no matter how hard we try to remove them.

During my recent private directed retreat two experiences converged to teach me more about myself, God, and how God deals with us. The first experience concerns the milkweeds that are growing in a little plot before our St. Joseph statue in the garden. The plot has a periwinkle ground-covering that is very attractive, and, at the beginning of spring, the vine bursts forth in pretty little purple flowers that delight the eyes. This plot is also riddled with milkweed. This weed is hard to see in the vine as it camouflages itself. I began pulling the weeds each day as I could see them, and was amazed how many there were and also how many I was missing. Sometimes the next day tall weeds would greet me! It seemed that I had started a never-ending battle: milkweeds vs. S. M. Catherine! Who would win? Would they finally disappear from the plot? Would I give up pulling them?

One day it struck me that these weeds are a symbol of my own weaknesses. Doesn't it say in Proverbs 24.6, that the "just" fall seven times a day? Yes, these weeds became for me a reminder of my daily task of cooperating with the Divine Gardener who certainly would like to see some of my "weeds" pulled up.

The other experience started unfolding for me two days before my retreat began. We had two families of mocking birds growing up in our garden. It was a joy for all of us to see these cute little balls of fluffy feathers chirping and hopping around watching us with trusting eyes, while testing their tiny wings. The parents kept flying around, also watching us, but never calling at us or scolding us, even when we walked very near to the baby birds. This particular morning, on going outside I heard a terrific racket: the parent birds were squawking and jumping up and down near an evergreen tree. A closer examination revealed our

S. Mary Catherine is a member of the Holy Adoration Sisters at the Convent of Divine Love in Philadelphia, PA.



Gisela Lichtgarn

neighbor's black cat stalking in the tree! Another Sister and I quickly ran to the tree clapping our hands and shouting at the cat, who swiftly descended. We then ran after the cat—perhaps a little overzealousy—to make sure it would leave the garden, and while running, I tripped and fell on the cement walk! My hands took the brunt of the fall and my knuckles were cut wide open so that I began the retreat with deep painful gashes in my fingers.

During the course of the retreat those wounds started to heal and just about drove me crazy with their burning and itching! Suddenly remembering the healing properties of the Aloe Vera plant, I went out to our garden workshop, where a huge Aloe Vera resides on one of the windowsills. Pulling off a soft, juice-filled leaf, I proceeded to my room, where I squeezed the leaf and applied some of the healing sap. It is colorless and not greasy, cool and soothing. I felt immediately that I was on to the right remedy and one supplied directly by our Creator. A good symbol of God's love, it fit in with the retreat. Once I began using the Aloe Vera plant, my fingers were no longer a big distraction, calling attention to themselves, for the pain was eased almost completely, and I could devote myself to God.

As the finger wounds were healing and S. M. Catherine could do no gardening—the milkweeds kept popping up! I realized that nature surrounds us with lessons in patience.

Today as I see the milkweeds still appearing and notice the scars on my fingers, the message repeatedly comes through: be patient with human weaknesses!

Discovering the Unlimited Self

GEERY S. HOWE

For this wellness expert, human wholeness depends on attunement to the Spirit in all persons and all things.

"It is wise now and then to remove yourself from everyday considerations; to calm your mind and try to understand what kind of person you are and what kind of person you want to be."
Paramahansa Yoga

Inner Vision Quests

When young Native Americans raised in the traditional ways reach maturity, they are taken into the wilderness to experience a vision quest. Through fasting and prayer, they open up to visions about themselves, their future, and their service to their tribe and this planet. After four days of sacred communion with the natural world and the inner self, they return to meet with a group of elders to discuss their visions. The time alone is both a physical and spiritual challenge, resulting in the young person receiving a new name and purpose in life.

In our society today, there are few opportunities for individuals to take quiet time to be open and receptive to sacred visions. There are even fewer groups of elders present to help in the listening and interpretation process. Those of us who seek to reflect on who we are and where we are going in our lives must thus create our own quiet time through daily meditation and prayer. For me, this regular time of renewal is the foundation of the wellness process, namely the journey to maximize one's personal health and wholeness while maintaining a balanced and purpose-filled life.

All of our perceptions about the world and ourself begin inside. As Hermann Hesse wrote: "There is not reality except the one contained within us. That is why so many people live such an unreal life. They take

A writer who resides in West Branch, Iowa, Geery Howe is President of Morning Star Associates, which offers training programs, seminars and counseling on human wellness. He focuses on helping people to maximize their personal health potential in a spiritual context.

the images outside them for reality and never allow the world within to assert itself." Regular prayer and meditation allows one the opportunity to learn that all growth and change begins on an inner spiritual level. To facilitate this connection with our inner life, we need to give ourselves permission to attune to that which is greater than ourself.

To start on a daily basis, create a space in your home or other surroundings where you will be uninterrupted by the phone, children, spouse or significant other. Find a location in which you are relaxed and peaceful in spirit. Then begin by simply listening to your breath and your surroundings. Listen for the spaces between the noises rather than the noises themselves. Strive to hear that which is far away and very close. In simple terms, "meditation. . . . is the art of suspending verbal and symbolic thinking for a time, somewhat as a courteous audience will stop talking when a concert is about to begin." I often find that it is in the quiet moments between the sounds that I can begin to hear my own inner voice, my own Inner Heart Guide more clearly.

For me, the Inner Heart Guide is a centered sense of knowing that comes when one is in touch with the universal truth that resides in all things. As Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, wrote: "Go deeper within and you will sit at the brink of eternity facing God." During this time of attuning, I feel as if my whole body is a receptive ear to the inner voice. I am the tuning fork and the Inner Heart Guide is the force that causes me to vibrate. By creating a receptive environment and increasing my personal level of awareness, I set the tone for listening to my heart center. The result is an awakening and union with Spirit.

Who am I?

Once you feel comfortable with being in silence and listening for the still, small voice that speaks from within, the journey of discovery continues. That which you are able to understand about you, your life and this world will be revealed to you at the right time and in the correct way. For now, ponder the simple question: "Who am I?"

Many of us describe ourselves in relation to our family and our work. For example: "Geery Howe is an education and wellness consultant and President of Morning Star Associates. He lives in West Branch, Iowa, with his family." While to a degree I am these things and these facts are

David Martosko

accurate, this is a limiting definition of myself and my world perspective.

Then who am I? In simple words, what is my essence?

When I begin a Wellness Program, I often ask participants for their first names, and where they would like to go on a two-week all expense paid vacation. At first, people tell me about their job and where they live, even if they have a dog or cat! They avoid giving themselves permission to get in touch with where they are and what they need. When you talk about how you will care for yourself, you begin to attune to your essence. You begin to recognize that there is more to life than going to work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or doing the laundry and keeping a clean house.

We need to remember the words of Jonathon Livingston Seagull: "Be limited by nothing at all." The definition of self is an important first step

in the process of developing new patterns of wholeness and attunement to the Spirit. It is the recognition that one is a part of the whole and the whole is part of the one. In short, "all know that the drop merges into the ocean but few know that the ocean merges into the drop." Coming into harmony with our spiritual core allows us to open up to our higher self.

There is no correct answer to the question: who am I? Each of us must begin the process of looking and exploring, listening and discovering this renewed inner connection in our own manner and at our own speed. The pathway toward a new sense of self-definition is always before us. Regular meditation and prayer help us to discover the way. Each of us determines the quality of our life and an unlimited definition of ourself is helpful in living it in a balanced and purpose-filled manner. As Seng Ts'an wrote: "The one is none other than the All, the All none other than the One." Give yourself permission to be one with the Spirit at all times and in all ways.

We welcome your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Thank you for *FiP*! It makes me feel closer to God and to all human beings. It makes me think and think and love and serve. God bless you.

Nereida Rodriguez; Houston, TX

We have been receiving a copy of your delightful *FiP* here at our little country retreat. It is sheer joy whenever I find it in the mailbox.

We are a very small Community—separated by geography but not in spirit—and since the three people listed below have just celebrated birthdays, I would like to send each of them a subscription to *FiP*—so we will all share the same "spiritual treat" at the same time!

FiP is very simply but very artfully done and each issue is a "cross section" of offerings. There has to be something that is *special* to *each person* but the *whole* will be common to *all*. Thank you for giving me a way to reach out to my spiritual family.

Incidentally, our Community (Daughters of Our Lady of Fatima) began in 1949, too!

Regina E. Cullen; Ottsville, PA

Thank you for all you do to promote growth in prayer and spirituality of all kinds. I myself am a Christian—a Roman Catholic who greatly treasures our precious heritage—yet I am so grateful to always have the opportunity you provide to learn more from and about other ways to God. Praise the God who makes us ultimately one, good, whole, and holy!

Alice C. Mansfield; Washington, D.C.

Nothing relates people more deeply and warmly than prayer. Irene and I have been richly rewarded by our membership in this great "fellowship in prayer." We want to share this joy with you.

John Fisher; New Hope, PA

Enclosed is a donation for your marvelous work.

Billie McCarthy; Springfield, IL

I enjoy your magazine so much. It's hard to keep ahead of it, since there is so much depth to each issue. For some reason I don't know how I

received a subscription—so I choose to count it as a little miracle! Please send subscriptions for the next year to the people on the enclosed lists. I'm giving them as Christmas gifts. Thanks again!

M. Klainer; Phoenix, AZ

I look forward to receiving future issues of *FiP* and greatly admire your publication. Each issue has helped me along in my spiritual journey, and I have shared your gentle wisdom with several of my fellows in the 12-Step Fellowship to which I belong.

P. Schweitzer; New York, NY

I appreciated the dictum "philosophy is the handmaiden of theology" even more after reading the article of Dominick Iorio in the June 1990 issue ["Inwardness, Outwardness, Upwardness"—*Ed.*]. It impelled me to send out waves of spiritual energy in the family ministry in which I am presently involved. Yes, three prepositions were the lynchpins of my prayer that evening—in, out, and up.

Rev. Edward P. Hogan; Oceanside, NY

Your journal is a great joy to me.

Helen Selleck; Old Lyme, CT

This is the *greatest* publication I receive—by a long shot!

John Shearer; Lexington, KY

Thank you, thank you, thank you for this beautiful magazine. Wisdom, love, goodness, truth and joy envelop me everytime *FIP* arrives at my door.

Tod Broderick; Milwaukee, WI

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